

REVIEW

of: the materials submitted for participation in the competition for the academic position of „professor“ at Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv

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member of the Scientific Jury in the competition for the academic position of „professor“ in the field of higher education 3. „Social, Economic and Legal Sciences“, professional direction 3.8. Economics (Marketing), for the needs of the Department of Marketing and International Economic Relations at the Faculty of Economic and Social Sciences at Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv, announced in the State Gazette - issue 96 of 11.11.2025.

According to a report by the Dean of the Faculty of Economic and Social Sciences, ref. No. RD-21-40 of 08.01.2026, by Order RD-22-44 of 09.01.2026 of the Rector of Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv for the approval of a Scientific Jury for the selection of a „Professor“, I have been appointed a member of the Scientific Jury, and by decision of the first meeting of the jury, I am obliged to prepare a review of the competition.

The documentation submitted is complete and complies with the Law on the Development of Academic Staff and the Regulations for the Development of Academic Staff at Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv. The documentation is perfectly prepared, which facilitates the preparation of the review.

1. Presentation of the candidate

Only one candidate submitted documents for the announced competition, namely Assoc. Prof. Teofana Valentinova Dimitrova-Staneva.

Assoc. Prof. Teofana Dimitrova-Staneva was born on November 20, 1977, in Plovdiv. She is now at the beginning of her „mature“ academic age, when researchers are both more productive and more thorough, and teachers are more confident and competent.

The candidate graduated with a master's degree in Corporate Finance from Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv in 2002. By 2004, she had successfully acquired another degree from the same university in Marketing.

The candidate continued her academic development, receiving a doctorate in Economics and Management (Industry) in 2013 with a thesis on Product Mix Management.

Since July 2005, Teofana Dimitrova-Staneva has been fully committed to her academic career at Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv (for 21 years now) as a lecturer and researcher in the field of economics, particularly marketing. In 2014, she was appointed to the academic position of „associate professor“ in „Marketing“.

I will allow myself to describe in more detail the academic development of the candidate, Assoc. Prof. Teofana Dimitrova-Staneva, because it illustrates a logical sequence in a precisely defined scientific field - „Economics“.

It is not surprising that, with such a rich palette of knowledge acquired, the knowledge of Assoc. Prof. Teofana Dimitrova-Staneva, PhD, should also be applied in management practice. Her value as a specialist is evidenced by some of the positions she has held or currently holds: from 2015 to 2023, she was head of the Department of Marketing and International Economic Relations at Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv; since 2018, she has been an independent expert at the National Agency for Assessment and Accreditation.

Additional information about her popularity and her ongoing development is also quite convincing. Since 2011, she has been a member of the Union of Economists in Bulgaria; since 2012, she has been a member of the Union of Scientists in Bulgaria; in February 2023, she completed training in StrikePlagiarism, organized by Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv; March 2023 - training on „Improving Digital Skills“ under project BG05M2OP001-2.016-0007, funded by the Operational Program „Science and Education for Smart Growth“; November 2024 - training on „Digital Psychology“ organized by Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv; March 2025 - participation in training on trademarks and industrial designs, organized by the Patent Office of the Republic of Bulgaria and the EU Intellectual Property Office; March 2025 - participation in training on „Basic and Internal Auditors ISO 9001:2015“, conducted by SJS Bulgaria EOOD; June 2025 - participation in training on „Artificial Intelligence in Education“, organized by Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv.

In other words, the candidate's academic development is enriched by the problems and solutions of management practice, while management practice benefits from her broad academic knowledge.

It can be concluded that the academic, creative, and professional career of Assoc. Prof. Teofana Dimitrova-Staneva has been on a steady upward trajectory over the past two decades.

2. Characteristics of the candidate's scientific activity and scientific works

The professional development of the candidate for the academic position of „professor“ has gone through various stages (in ascending order). Since joining Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv, she has participated as an author and contributor in various specialized scientific events. This is a very impressive professional (scientific and practical) career.

As an academic researcher, Assoc. Prof. Teofana Dimitrova-Staneva, judging by the works presented, has specialized mainly in the field of marketing, marketing management, strategic marketing, marketing research, marketing mix, brand management, as well as the connections and relationships between different organizations – horizontal and vertical, market and institutional. In this regard, I would like to point out that the candidate is fluent in English and Russian, which has allowed her to study specialized scientific literature in these languages (in addition to Bulgarian), some of which is indicated in her publications.

Assoc. Prof. Teofana Dimitrova-Staneva is the author of numerous publications. Specifically for her participation in the competition, she has submitted 35 publications (after defending her dissertation and after becoming an associate professor): 1 monograph – habilitation thesis, 2 published monographs; 1 published book based on a defended dissertation for the award of an educational and scientific degree „doctor“, 8 studies published in scientific publications, referenced and indexed in world-renowned scientific information databases (Scopus and/or Web of Science); 4 studies published in non-referenced peer-reviewed journals or published in edited collective volumes; 5 articles and reports published in scientific publications, referenced and indexed in world-renowned scientific information databases (Scopus and/or Web of Science); 9 articles published in non-refereed peer-reviewed journals or published in edited collective volumes; 4 reports published in non-refereed peer-reviewed journals or published in edited collective volumes; 1 textbook. Some of the publications are co-authored, for which separation protocols have been submitted.

2.1. Quantitative assessment based on regulatory criteria and indicators

According to the adopted „Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria“, candidates for the academic position of „Professor“ are assessed on the basis of a set of criteria and indicators. These are specified imperatively both in the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and in the related requirements adopted in the Regulations for the Development of Academic Staff at Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv.

Compliance with the basic legal requirements of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria. According to Article 29, candidates for the academic position of „professor“ must meet the following conditions:

1. Have obtained the educational and scientific degree of „doctor“ – „yes.“
2. Have held the academic position of „associate professor“ at the same or another higher education institution or scientific organization for no less than two academic years or no less than five years – „yes.“
3. Have presented a published monographic work or equivalent publications in specialized scientific journals, which do not repeat those presented for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree „doctor“ and for holding the academic position of „associate professor“ – „yes.“
4. Have submitted other original scientific research works, publications, inventions, and other scientific and applied scientific developments or artistic achievements, which are evaluated as a whole – „yes“;
5. Meet the minimum national requirements under Article 2b, paragraphs 2 and 3, respectively the requirements under Article 2b, paragraph 5 – „yes“;
6. Have no proven plagiarism or inaccuracy of the scientific data presented in the scientific works in accordance with the established legal procedure – „none.“

Compliance with the quantitative requirements of the Regulations on the conditions and procedure for occupying academic positions at Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv for occupying the academic position of „professor“: also „yes“.

It can be concluded that, in terms of regulatory criteria and indicators for the evaluation of scientific research work, the candidate fully meets these requirements. These facts are reflected in the review of scientific works.

The report on the individual scientometric indicators covered, which the candidate has submitted, is as follows.

Група от показатели	Съдържание	Професор – минимален праг точки	Професор – отчетен брой точки
А	Показател 1	50	50
Б	Показател 2	-	-
В	Показател 3	100	100
Г	Сума от показателите от 4 до 10	200	599.16
Д	Сума от показателите от 11 до 13	100	150
Е	Сума от показателите от 14 до края	100	185
	Общ брой точки:	550	1084.16

In other words, the regulatory requirements of 550 points were exceeded twice, with 1084.16 points recorded.

2.2. Quality assessment of scientific works

According to the adopted Law and Regulations for the Development of Academic Staff at Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv, candidates for the academic position of „Professor“ are evaluated on the basis of a set of criteria and indicators for scientific research activity.

Contemporary issues in marketing are extremely diverse, rich, and in many respects highly controversial. It is precisely the latter circumstance that reveals fertile ground for conducting analytical research and, on that basis, preparing marketing forecasts, strategies, programs, and plans—not only at the corporate level, but also at the national, regional (in the European Union, for example), and even global levels. At the same time, corporate marketing management (especially that of transnational corporations – TNCs) often abandons such analyses and forecasts in order to direct and implement scenarios that rely more on rent-seeking or the seizure of market shares (belonging to competitors) than on focusing solely on the needs of people as consumers; In other words, the „classical market economy“ in the era of TNCs remains a romantic memory of a dysfunctional ideology and market sectarianism, but it is not a reliable guide for practice. This fact is already recognized by a significant number of scholars specializing in this field of economic knowledge, including manifestations of new ideas that I find in some of the candidate's presented works.

I focus my attention on the presented monographs: „Sustainable consumer behavior: From global evidence to local insights among Generation Z in Bulgaria“, „Marketing Communications and Building Competitive Advantages by Higher Education Institutions“ and „Strategy for Building the Public Image of Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv“.

In this case, I am not acting as an „additional“ reviewer (all three monographs have authoritative official reviewers), but as a reviewer looking for elements of contribution.

The first monograph, „Sustainable consumer behavior: From global evidence to local insights among Generation Z in Bulgaria“, not only fits into the most current marketing (and economic and sociological) issues, but also goes beyond conventional research. On the one hand, the author rightly focuses her attention on sustainable development (which she calls an „unprecedented necessity“), which encompasses the production of goods, the consumption of those goods, and marketing in its broadest sense (both within and outside the „market“). Starting with the warnings in „The Limits to Growth“ by the Club of Rome (which the author sets as a benchmark), the logic of development has been disrupted. Instead of the familiar logic of „crisis → recovery“, we have: economic, demographic, climatic, geopolitical, value, and other crises, i.e., at least ten mega-threats (according to Nouriel Roubini). The world is in an abnormally rapid stage of historical transition, which will either lead to the „sixth extinction“ or qualitatively change social and global relations, including in relation to the economy. In this sense, marketing is becoming subordinate to sustainable development, rather than, as has been the case until now, the most important thing in the economy being quick financial results for corporations. I find this different perspective on marketing prospects by my colleague Teofana Dimitrova-Staneva extremely valuable. On the other hand, the topic of consumer behavior, which also continues to be interpreted by many marketers through the reactions discovered by Pavlov (that animals and humans have not only innate but also learned reflexes that arise through repeated combinations of stimuli), is analyzed much more broadly and deeply in this case, which has borne fruit in the form of results from bibliographic and field studies. This is the second major and groundbreaking contribution. Thirdly, the focus on Generation Z, rather than on all generations, is correct, as this is the generation that is most interested in sustainability, placing sustainable purchases above brands (according to a study cited by the World Economic Forum, 75% of Gen Z prefer sustainable products to branded ones). This generation is often referred to as „the sustainability generation,“ as not only are young people themselves strongly oriented toward sustainable consumption, but they also influence other generations (such as Generation X and Millennials) to increase their purchases of sustainable products. Verifying whether this sustainable consumption is a reality in Bulgaria is also a major contribution by the author.

I find not only contributions but also discoveries by the author in this monograph: four main research groups identified within SCB; the grouping of behavior into the following categories: economic, psychological, social, cognitive, institutional, and

structural/technological; the outline of two main motivational mechanisms; the proof that the determinants and manifestations of SCB are not universal but vary depending on the economic sector and the cultural-geographical context; the confirmation of 12 of the 15 previously formulated theses, etc. I consider this monograph not only to be timely, valuable, and original, but also a useful guide for future research on SCB in the four directions described by the author.

The second and third monographs (2021 and 2020), in which the candidate participates, are very close to some of my personal research, so I can evaluate them against the background of other similar studies. The candidate's personal contribution is expressed in the systematization and critical reflection on the theory of competitiveness in higher education, as well as in the identification and analysis of the factors for competitiveness of higher education institutions, including the instruments of the marketing mix with a focus on the educational product. The results of an empirical study on the communication practices of Bulgarian higher education institutions are analyzed and summarized. Recommendations are made for both the „recovery“ of higher education institutions from a marketing perspective and for building the public image of Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv, which are also valuable contributions.

As for the other scientific studies, articles, and conference reports, they are devoted to the study of various marketing and management issues: consumer behavior, including sustainable behavior (Nos. 7, 8, 9, 13, 17, 18, 23, 24), sectoral marketing (Nos. 5, 27, 29, 30, 31), marketing of educational services (Nos. 6, 10, 11, 16, 19, 20, 22, 25, 28, 32, 33, 34), marketing of health services (Nos. 12, 21), digitization and marketing (No. 14), ethics and marketing (No. 15), marketing management (No. 26). I specify in detail the focus of the studies, articles, and conference reports to show that they are directly or indirectly related to marketing.

According to the guidelines of the Ministry of Education and Science, textbooks are not classified as scientific publications of a research nature, which is illogical and incorrect – it is implicitly assumed that textbooks are a mirror image of foreign creativity. At the same time, teaching is the main job in higher education institutions, but the compass set by the Ministry of Education and Science drastically underestimates the production of textbooks, which harms both students and teachers by placing other criteria on a pedestal in terms of assessment. In my opinion, the textbook „Marketing Management“ is an intelligently presented scientific research product that not only synthesizes research on the subject of marketing management, but also adds personal contributions by Assoc. Prof. Teofana Dimitrova-Staneva, especially in the sections on measuring and evaluating competitiveness.

All of the publications presented demonstrate qualities that present the candidate as an authoritative researcher who is capable of comprehending a vast amount of complex scientific

products in the field of marketing management, accepting or rejecting the studied theses and hypotheses, and, through her academic achievements, to build on the theory and practice of marketing with her own contributions.

3. Contributions to scientific research

The scientific interests and contributions expressed in the candidate's publications can be divided into several areas, which I will attempt to summarize. Here are the contributions that stand out most prominently:

3.1. Further development and refinement of scientific theory and research on consumer behavior, and in particular on sustainable consumer behavior and consumption. The leading theoretical frameworks, main determinants and barriers, dominant thematic areas and behavioural outcomes in the scientific literature on consumer behaviour and behaviour aimed at sustainable consumption have been identified. A methodology for researching purchasing behavior among Generation Z has been developed and tested, including modeling and assessment of the direct and indirect effects of key environmental, social, and personal factors on purchase intention and actual sustainable consumer behavior. Development, empirical testing, and validation of psychometric models for measuring consumer behavior in the Bulgarian context, through which complex causal relationships between latent constructs, including direct, indirect, and moderating effects, are analyzed, taking into account the specific characteristics of Bulgarian research participants.

3.2. Enriching marketing theory and practice for the educational services sector, especially in higher education. The role of the marketing concept in education, the elements of the marketing mix and the links between them, the assessment of the competitiveness of higher education institutions, as well as the main approaches, tools, and indicators for their management have been systematized and conceptually elaborated. Further development of scientific knowledge on the branding of educational products in terms of brand image, brand associations, perceived quality, satisfaction, and engagement—all of which function as key factors in shaping loyalty. Similarly, a connection is sought between marketing (looking „outside“ the educational organization) and management (looking „inside“ the organization), which are two sides of the same managerial economic system.

3.3. Expanding and enriching the scientific and applied aspects of marketing management. Analytical and hybrid management tools (SWOT-AHP-TOWS, SPACE analysis) have been developed, integrated, and tested. Key management opportunities and challenges in various sectors (healthcare, finance, telecommunications, wine industry) have been identified,

supporting strategic decision-making and the development of sustainable competitive advantages. Marketing-based management has been proposed, substantiated with appropriate evidence, and its applicability has been examined, ensuring positive impacts and improvements in economic activity, even though this aspect of business activities does not formally fit into marketing itself.

The candidate's publications can be used in the teaching process in various academic disciplines.

In summary, the scientific achievements of Assoc. Prof. Teofana Dimitrova-Staneva can be classified as „significantly enriching existing knowledge“ and „applying scientific achievements in practice,“ as well as obtaining new data and facts about the economic and social objects studied.

4. Characterization of the candidate's academic reputation

With a minimum of 100 points required for citations, 150 points have been achieved, which is an impressive achievement for a Bulgarian economist.

A significant portion of the citations are in scientific publications, referenced and indexed in world-renowned scientific information databases (Scopus and/or Web of Science). There are also numerous citations in monographs and collective volumes with scientific review, in non-referenced journals with scientific review, and in Google Scholar I find 273 references (228 from 2021), h-index – 6 (6), i10-index – 6 (6).

I confirm that the academic reputation of Assoc. Prof. Teofana Dimitrova-Staneva does credit not only to Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv, but also to Bulgarian higher education institutions in economics, as well as to Bulgarian universities abroad.

5. Characteristics of the candidate's teaching activities

Assoc. Prof. Teofana Dimitrova-Staneva has the necessary employment at Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv.

As a lecturer at Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv, the candidate for „professor“ for the period 2020-2025 has taught and continues to teach lectures and exercises in the disciplines of „Marketing“ and „Marketing Management“; She has developed curricula in „Marketing Management,“ „Marketing Research,“ and „Brand Management.“

Such a focus on several academic disciplines is very useful for the research development of any lecturer, unlike the traditional overload of too many disciplines among colleagues.

6. Comments and recommendations on academic activities

Every candidate for the next step in their academic development can be challenged and guided towards further evolution of scientific ideas and focusing research in the area in which they excel. I would like to make the following recommendations. They are based on the best collegial attitude, on the idea that through them the candidate can think both about her future and about the future of science, which she will continue to develop in her academic pursuits, as well as about the evolution of her university:

6.1. As I mentioned above, the candidate has excellent scientific achievements, which will enable her, either independently or with her colleagues (why not as a collective inter-university product), to develop an authoritative textbook on „Fundamentals of Marketing“ and other disciplines that she teaches or will teach. Moreover, the economic and social sciences (among which marketing is located in both types) are in a difficult position to explain how to deal with the polycrisis. Conversely, old marketing textbooks (intended for corporate management) are of interest mainly to historians. There is a „need“ to explain the new type of interaction between „management of single-sector transnational corporations – management of a multi-sector national economy – management of transnational cross-sector institutions“ and, within this framework, the new meaning of marketing.

6.2. Through a significant part of her research and its results, my colleague Teofana Dimitrova-Staneva has addressed what is known as „consumer behavior,“ which is of essential importance to marketing. For decades, however, marketing theory has been dominated by methodological individualism, a research paradigm according to which: social phenomena must be explained through the actions, motivations, and decisions of individuals; society is understood as a collection of individual choices rather than an independent superstructure; analysis begins with the „individual“ rather than the „community“ or „structure.“ Methodological individualism is promoted by neoclassical economics, rational choice theory, liberal political theory, and some extreme trends in sociology and anthropology. In marketing, when methodological individualism is applied, the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), extended TPB models, Dual Process Theories, supplemented by the COM B Model (Capability–Opportunity–Motivation → Behavior), Fogg Behavior Model (FBM), and others begin to dominate. The opposite approach to individualism is methodological holism, which views society, norms, and structures as defining frameworks within which individuals act and exhibit their „behavior.“ Methodological holism can even be observed in such „liberal“ societies and economies as those in the US („Make America Healthy Again“) and the EU

(„Farm to Fork“; Nutri-Score, REACH Regulation). The unambiguous approach in the marketing discipline of „Consumer Behavior“ suffers from its incompleteness. I challenge my colleague Teofana Dimitrova-Staneva to further develop her research in a systematic aspect and in a specific direction: „Human needs, public decisions, and consumer behavior“ (even though public decisions in our economies are often the result of corporate lobbying and/or corruption), which would be a qualitative improvement on existing theories.

I would like to emphasize that the recommendations I am making do not detract from the candidate's academic work.

7. Additional information

I have no family ties with the candidate.

We have no joint publications.

Upon reviewing the publications, I found no evidence of plagiarism.

CONCLUSION

Assoc. Prof. Teofana Dimitrova-Staneva, in her capacity as a candidate for the academic position of „professor,“ significantly exceeds the accepted recommended scientific and scientometric formal requirements. The candidate's scientific output contains results representing scientific and applied scientific contributions; it is aimed at improving science and, in particular, the theory and practice of marketing.

Based on my review of the scientific works submitted, their significance, and their scientific and practical contributions, I find sufficient grounds to propose that Assoc. Prof. Teofana Valentinova Dimitrova-Staneva be elected to the academic position of „professor“ in the field of higher education 3. „Social, Economic, and Legal Sciences,“ professional field 3.8 „Economics,“ scientific specialty „Marketing“ for the needs of the Department of Marketing and International Economic Relations at the Faculty of Economic and Social Sciences at Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv. I am convinced that the academic position of „professor“ will be well deserved and will provide new opportunities for her future scientific work and teaching activities.

Author of the review:

January 19, 2026

(Prof. Dr. Boyan Lyubomirov Durankev)